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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 001823

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NSC FOR WATERS AND DAVIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: SHURA COUNCIL ELECTIONS: NDP "WINS" SWEEPING
VICTORY

REF: A. CAIRO 1777

[1](#)B. CAIRO 1717

Classified By: Charge Stuart E. Jones, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The official results of the June 11 Shura Council elections, released amid widespread claims of fraud, are that the ruling National Democratic Party won 59 seats (out of the 77 seats in contention). The opposition Taggamu Party won one. No Muslim Brotherhood (MB) candidates won seats. 17 races will move to run-off elections on June 18; none of those contests will involve any MB or opposition candidates. Egypt's Supreme Electoral Commission (SEC) announced that voter turnout was 31.32 percent; NGO's and monitoring organizations assert turnout did not exceed six percent. The SEC's weak first-time performance, in which it appeared overshadowed by the Ministry of Interior, and did little to establish credibility as an independent actor, sets an unfortunate precedent for future Egyptian elections. The shut-out of the MB, as well as the harsh government campaign of arrests prior to the elections, is indicative of severely diminished GOE tolerance for the MB's participation in Egyptian politics. End summary.

THE OFFICIAL RESULTS

[1](#)2. (C) After a 24-hour delay in releasing the official election results, the Supreme Elections Commission (SEC) announced late in the afternoon of June 13 that the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) won 59 of the contested Shura Council seats, while the Taggamu Party won one seat in Alexandria, and 17 races will move to run-off elections on June 18. No MB-affiliated candidate won a seat, and none of the run-off races include MB or opposition party candidates; only NDP candidates and NDP-affiliated independents are in the running. One of the victorious NDP candidates is a woman - the first female ever elected to the Shura Council.

SEC ALLEGES 31.23% VOTER TURNOUT

[1](#)3. (C) SEC chairman Adel Andrawes announced that voter turnout was 31.23 percent, and that the "increase in participation" was due to the establishment of the SEC ("an independent entity which has given the voters confidence in participation"), "the political momentum that Egypt is witnessing due to the recent constitutional amendments," "the increase in female voters," and "the calm atmosphere in which elections took place." (Note: 31.23 percent voter turnout would mean that approximately 11 million of Egypt's 35.8 million registered voters cast ballots. This is an increase

from the official figure of 27.1 percent turnout in the March national referendum on constitutional amendments. End note). Various Egyptian NGO's and monitoring organizations have reported that voter turnout did not exceed six percent, an estimate that tracks with the minimal number of voters that Emboffs observed (as reported ref A, Embassy teams visited polling stations in nine Egyptian governorates). Emboffs consistently saw polling stations throughout the day with merely a handful of voters, or none at all.

ALLEGATIONS OF RAMPANT FRAUD

¶4. (C) Complaints of fraud and rigging have emerged from civil society and media reporting. SEC spokesman Sameh El-Kashef asserted that the reported incidents of fraud were "individual occurrences," and not indicative of broader problems. Al Jazeera aired footage of security officers stuffing ballot boxes, filmed through an open window at a polling station. Monitoring organizations reported numerous instances of security services blocking opposition voters' access to polling stations, preventing opposition candidates and their representatives from entering polling stations, vote-buying, and the prevention of registered observers from monitoring the casting of votes. Independent monitors reported several cases of voters with beards or wearing veils (i.e., presumed voters for the MB) being turned away from polling stations. Five registered election monitors were reportedly arrested; two have since been released.

¶5. (C) As noted ref A, Embassy officers witnessed a range of irregularities, from NDP officials casually stuffing ballot boxes at countryside polling stations, to presumed MB voters being turned away from polling stations. Emboffs visiting

CAIRO 00001823 002 OF 003

districts known to be MB-strongholds observed some polling stations closed at mid-day. One Emboff was approached outside of a polling station by a representative of an independent candidate, who alleged that he was not allowed in to observe the vote, as NDP officials were doing. Emboffs observed numerous transparent ballot boxes that were either near-empty, or packed to the brim.

¶6. (C) An Embassy contact who is a judge that participated in counting ballots told us that he observed several instances of fraud. (Note: Under Egypt's revised Political Rights Law, judges no longer supervise voting in polling stations, but do observe vote-counting at central polling stations in each district. End note). This judge alleged that in the operations center of the SEC in Mansoura, he witnessed a ballot box being opened by an MOI official, who placed a thick stack of ballots into it. The judge also saw "several instances" of 20-30 ballots in a ballot box that were all folded together (an impossibility if different voters had cast the ballots separately).

RELIGIOUS SLOGANS STILL IN USE

¶7. (C) Despite the recent changes to the Political Rights Law that ban the use of religious slogans and symbols in campaigns, Koranic references were in full view on the posters of NDP, independent, and MB candidates. Emboffs across the Nile Delta region observed only a few posters of MB candidates (with the presumption being that they had been torn down). In response to the removal of posters, in some towns the MB had spray-painted the names of candidates on the walls, as well as hung banners stating, "Islam is the Solution," without the name of a candidate. In Sharqiyya province, poloff observed several election posters for different NDP candidates replete with Koranic verses, prayers, and the slogan, "God Is With Us." Contrastingly, in the same electoral district, we saw numerous posters for two

different MB candidates that did not use the MB,s traditional religious slogan, but rather, simply the words, "Together for Reform."

SEC IN "FULL COOPERATION" WITH
INTERIOR MINISTRY

¶8. (C) As expected, the Ministry of Interior role in the elections appeared to surpass that of the new Supreme Elections Commission (SEC). MOI personnel were in charge of all polling stations that Emboff's visited, while we met no SEC officers or observers. According to remarks by the SEC's spokesman, the SEC worked "in full cooperation with the Interior Ministry." One Embassy judicial contact involved in elections oversight told us that while visiting SEC headquarters in the week leading up to the elections, he saw two checks from the SEC to the MOI, for 50 million LE and 37 million LE respectively (a total of roughly 15 million USD), which he took as an indication that the SEC was effectively ceding much of its funding and oversight role to the MOI. On June 14, independent and opposition newspapers printed headlines criticizing the SEC's performance: "The SEC Failed the Test of the Shura Elections" (Nahdet Masr) and "The Scandalous Elections Fraud Puts the SEC Into Crisis" (Al Wafd).

MB DENOUNCES RESULTS

¶9. (C) An MB statement (posted on the group's website) denounced the election results as "a setback for democracy." It continued, "The magnitude of violations and crimes committed on election day is unprecedented in the history of Egyptian elections. These violations included closing voting centers, denying citizens access to vote, assaulting and beating voters and candidates, threatening and intimidating heads and member of the voting committees, and stuffing ballot boxes. These crimes were preceded by preventing MB candidates from campaigning and hanging posters We declare that we will ... continue to press for comprehensive reform ... so as to elect parliaments that express the free will of Egyptians ..." The spokesman for the MB's parliamentary bloc, Hamdi Hassan, told reporters, "With such an 'election,' Egypt has become a laughing stock around the world." Other MB parliamentarians were quoted in Egyptian papers as saying, "If we won 20 percent of the seats in the People's Assembly in 2005, how could we win no seats in the

CAIRO 00001823 003 OF 003

Shura Council in 2007? These elections were a complete fraud."

IMPORT OF THE ELECTIONS

¶10. (C) Although the recent amendments to the constitution bolstered the Shura Council's limited role, the body remains a bit player on the Egyptian political scene. Seats on it are desirable largely due to the prestige, contacts, and parliamentary immunity that they provide. The results of the June 11 election will have little impact on the functioning of the Shura Council itself, which will continue to be overwhelmingly dominated by the NDP, and thus effectively a rubber-stamp for the ruling party. The SEC's weak first-time performance, in which it did little to establish credibility as an independent actor, sets an unfortunate precedent for future Egyptian elections. Despite GOE claims regarding voter turnout, the trickles of voters on election day are indicative of the Egyptian citizenry's lack of interest and lack of confidence in electoral proceedings. Lastly, the shut-out of the MB, as well as the harsh government campaign of arrests prior to the elections (between 790-900 MB members were detained in the two weeks leading up election day),

indicates diminished GOE tolerance for the MB's participation in Egyptian politics, compared to the 2005 People's Assembly elections.

JONES